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TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [JO](#) [KHMN](#)

SUBJECT: NEW TERRORISM CASES ENTER JORDANIAN COURT SYSTEM;
ZARQAWI AFFILIATES REMAIN DEFIANT IN SEPARATE TRIALS

REF: A. AMMAN 00162

[B](#). 04 AMMAN 08601

[C](#). 04 AMMAN 09243

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (U) Two new terrorism cases began court proceedings in early January. The State Security Court on January 9 formally charged 16 Jordanians for plotting against foreign and Jordanian targets during 2004. Separately, the Court on January 4 indicted four men accused of planning attacks against foreign tourists and Jordanian intelligence officials. Meanwhile, two high-profile terrorism cases linked to fugitive Jordanian terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi moved forward in the Court in late December. Suspects in the Jayusi cell, accused of plotting to bomb the U.S. Embassy and Jordanian government targets, rejected their court-appointed attorneys. Prosecution and defense witnesses in the case of Miqdad al-Dabbas, accused of working with Zarqawi to target Jordanian interests in Iraq, provided conflicting testimony about Dabbas' claims of torture while in custody. End Summary.

COURT FORMALLY CHARGES TAHAWI CELL

[1](#)2. (U) In a case that came to the public's attention only last week (ref A), the State Security Court on January 9 formally charged 16 Jordanian men for plotting attacks against foreign and Jordanian targets during 2004. All are in custody except for Khalid Fawzi, who is being tried in absentia. The men, all between 18 and 33 years of age, mostly hail from Irbid. According to the charge sheet, they were led by 50-year-old Abed Shihadah al-Tahawi. Tahawi reportedly lived in Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan between 1979 and 1990, during which time he obtained weapons training. In 1990 he was expelled from Saudi Arabia for his takfiri leanings (which brand as infidels Muslim governments and individuals who are insufficiently observant) and criticism of the Saudi royal family. Upon his return to Jordan, he taught religious classes in Irbid-area mosques, which included harsh criticism of Arab regimes. He recruited the other defendants through these classes, and the group collected money and bought weapons under Tahawi's guidance to plot attacks.

[1](#)3. (U) In addition to the targets previously reported (including foreign archeologists, a U.S. military band performing at the Jerash festival, and an Irbid hotel believed to host Israeli tourists), press reports say the group also targeted a local journalist (and post contact) who had criticized Zarqawi during a television program, and the director of the Jerash Festival.

FOUR JORDANIANS INDICTED FOR ANOTHER PLOT AGAINST TOURISTS

[1](#)4. (U) In an apparently separate case, the State Security Court's prosecutor general Mahmoud Obeidat on January 4 formally charged another four Jordanians with plotting terrorist attacks against foreign tourists and Jordanian intelligence officers. According to the charge sheet, the four were arrested in August and September 2004 for their plans to kill foreign tourists visiting various areas in Jordan, as well to attack GID personnel and vehicles. In preparation for the attacks, the group allegedly bought a machine-gun, two handguns, and ammunition. The defendants were named as Suleiman Hassan Saleh Sheikh Ali; Omar Roumi Saleh Sheikh Ali; Riyadh Jamil Suleiman Abu Duhaileh; and Ahmad Mohammad Mahmoud Abu Katmeh.

[1](#)5. (U) According to the charge sheet, the group, which also reportedly subscribed to the takfiri ideology, met several times since January 2003 to choose targets. Among them: American and Israeli tourists traveling by bus to tourist sites, including the Jordan Valley, the (Jordanian) site of Jesus' baptism, and the ruins at Um Qais on the northern border. They also allegedly planned to torch a GID vehicle during prayers at the Irbid refugee camp mosque and to attack another that patrolled inside the camp; the charge sheet said that the group had already mapped its route. The men are expected to stand trial within the next few weeks.

JAYUSI CELL MEMBERS REFUSE COURT-APPOINTED LAWYERS

16. (U) In one of the most high-profile terrorist cases to date in Jordan, the State Security Court in late December heard the refusal of several defendants, accused of planning vehicle bomb attacks against the U.S. Embassy and GOJ targets, to accept court-appointed lawyers. The judge acquiesced to their demand to have lawyers selected by the Jordanian Bar Association, and adjourned indefinitely to make the necessary arrangements. Nine of 13 suspects (dubbed the "Jayusi cell" for its leader, 36-year-old Azmi Jayusi) are in custody for their role in the plot, disrupted by Jordanian security forces in April 2004. Jordan's most-wanted fugitive, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and three others are being tried in absentia. Following their formal indictment in October 2004 (ref B), the trial opened in mid-December under tight security and intense media coverage.

17. (U) The group allegedly first planned to launch a rocket attack on Eilat from Aqaba, but changed their plans upon Zarqawi's instructions and decided to target the GID and other targets. The prosecution alleges that Jayusi left Jordan in 1999 for Afghanistan where he trained in the manufacture of explosives and the use of detonators. During his time in Afghanistan, prosecutors say he met Zarqawi.

DABBAS CLAIMS TORTURE

18. (U) In yet another case related to Zarqawi, the lawyer for 24-year-old Miqdad al-Dabbas, accused of plotting attacks against Jordanian targets in Iraq with Zarqawi, told the Security Court on December 27 that his client was innocent of all charges. Attorney Amjad Khreisat said that Dabbas' confessions were "extracted under torture and duress," and that he was "forced into signing a confession for something he did not plot." Prosecution and defense witnesses provided conflicting testimony about Dabbas' torture allegations. The prosecution called an intelligence official who interrogated Dabbas to dispute the allegations; the official said that Dabbas "confessed willingly without being subjected to any form of torture or duress." On January 11, the defense called two prison inmates to testify that they observed evidence of torture on Dabbas' body. The judge adjourned indefinitely so that attorneys could prepare closing remarks.

19. (U) Dabbas first entered the system as a witness in the trial of Zarqawi fund-raiser Bilal al-Hiyari. Upon conclusion of that trial in October 2004, Dabbas was indicted on charges that he conspired to conduct terrorist acts against Jordanian and U.S. targets in Iraq (ref B). Dabbas pleaded "not guilty" during the opening session of his trial in December and claimed not to know Zarqawi. The prosecution alleges that Dabbas befriended Zarqawi during a visit to Iraq in 2002, and that Zarqawi asked Dabbas to return to Jordan to collect funds for his militant activities. When Dabbas returned to Iraq he pledged obedience to Zarqawi, who asked him to examine Jordanian targets in Baghdad, including the Jordanian embassy and military attache's office. "Dabbas monitored the premises and provided Zarqawi with detailed security information," according to the charge sheet. The embassy was bombed in August 2003, but the prosecutor has not tied that attack to Dabbas directly. The charge sheet does not provide details about the nature of Dabbas' alleged U.S. targets.

110. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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